

A
 REVIEW
 OF THE
 STATE
 OF THE
 BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, March 31. 1709.

THE Story of the *African Company* having prov'd longer than it was expected, I find Abundance of People begin to enquire into it a little, that did not mind it before.—And as they are amus'd by the specious Tales of interested and partial People, and so prejudiced for Want of Information, I thought it would not be amiss to enter a little into the History of this whole Affair, which I shall do for undeceiving such abus'd People; and this I shall do as briefly I can.

We have had in *England* for near 50 Years, a very beneficial Trade carry'd on from *England* to the Coast of *Africa*, vulgarly call'd *Guinea*, and from thence to our Colonies in *America*.—Our Exports from *England* have been, generally speaking, our Woollen Manufactures, particularly *Perpetuana's*, a Kind of Serge us'd in that Country, with some Manufactures introduc'd merely by the Company it self, and call'd therefore more properly *Guinea Stuffs*.—And when the Trade has been flourishing, they have exported of these Things 50 to 60000 per Annum.—The Return for this has been partly to *England*, in Gold-Dust, or in Ivory, or Elephants Teeth, raw Hides, red Earth, Bees-Wax, &c. Com-

modities all very useful in *England*; and which we should be oblig'd otherwise to buy from other Nations with our ready Money; the other Branch of their Return has been in Negroes or Slaves carry'd from thence chiefly to our Island Colonies in *America*, such as *Jamaica*, *Barbadoes*, *Nevis*, *Antegoa*, *St. Christophers*, &c. And a few to the Continent, especially *Virginia* and *Maryland*.

This Trade has hitherto been carry'd on in an exclusive Company, as the *East-India* Trade has, and seems to lie under some Necessity of being so carry'd on, there being no Nation under whose Protection they can trade, no National Justice to whom they can apply in Cases of Dispute, no Body Politick with whom they can negotiate, or Government with whom they can treat for the Regulation of Commerce, as in the Cases of all regulated Companies there are.

And this by the way, I think, may be laid down as a Maxim in the Case of Companies in *England*; a Regulated Company is erected in no Trade, but which may be carry'd on by private Stocks without any such Regulations at all; and an Exclusive Company is allow'd in *England*, in no Case but where private Trade cannot be carry'd on

on but by Force—The Difference of the Two being this; that in a Regulated Company every Man trades as he pleases, for more or less, and only comes under some united Conditions for the empowering them as a Body to negotiate with the respective Government of the Places they trade to—But a Joint-Stock is where there are Settlements formed among barbarous Nations, that are not to be traded with but by Force, where no Justice or Laws of Commerce are so establish'd, as may be depended upon for Safety and Protection.

And such is all its Parts: Is the Trade to Africa—And this, without entering farther into the Case, has oblig'd the Opposers of the present Company to come in to the Justice and Necessity of Forts and Castles to maintain the Trade, tho' at first they flouted at the Nation, and ridicul'd the Supposition—But their own Witnesses before the *House of Commons* flew in their Faces, and did the Company the Justice to own their Necessity.

Ever since the first Establishment of the Trade, Forts and Castles have been maintain'd for this Purpose, and when the present Company was first erected on the Ruins of an Old Company that went before them—it was thought the highest Piece of Justice in the World, that the Old Company, which was to die in the Erection of a New, should reimburse their Expences on the said Forts and Settlements, which was done, the New Company paying them 34000*l.* for the same.

Ever since this Settlement, the Company have gone on to enlarge their Trade, encreas'd the Number and the Dimensions of their said Forts—Tho' labouring under the continual Inconvenience and Discouragements of Interlopers, who pleaded a Right to the Trade, the Exclusive Right of the Company being only a Grant by Patent from the Crown.

At last, tyr'd with these Quarrels, the Company and the Interlopers came as it were to a Treaty of Peace, and agreed, that it should be free for every Man to trade to *Africk*, paying a Duty of 10 per Cent. upon all Exports and Imports, (Gold and Negroes excepted) which Money was to be paid to the Company, but appropriated to be by them apply'd to the maintaining of these Forts and Castles, &c. in *Africa*—By this Act we say, the Company's Exclusive Charter and Right of Trade is recognized by Parliament, and consequently confirm'd; and now we are to call the other no more

Interlopers, but separate Traders, or 10 per Cent. Men.

But to go on with our History—The Rival Interests of the Company and separate Traders coming now to clash, they fall to all the common Methods of trading Politicks, I won't say Knavery, such as Circumventing, Under-selling, Engrossing, Forestalling, and in short Ruining one another, and this on both sides.—Till the separate Traders falling from 97 Ships a Year to 19, and the Company in Proportion, the Trade it self suffers between them, and, without doing wrong to either side, I say, is in a fair Way to be lost.

The Company also having suffer'd prodigious Losses at Sea by the taking their Ships; in *Africk* by the *French* taking their Settlements and Forts, viz. at *Gamboa*, *Seira-leon*, &c. and at *St. Christophers* and *Newis*, by losing their Effects, by all which they make it appear, they have lost 400000*l.* since the War: By these Losses they are brought so low, that they find themselves necessitated to fly to the Government for a new Settlement; in which they propose an Alternative either for their own Preservation, so as to enable them by the publick Assistance to retrieve their Losses, a Thing not altogether unjust; or that they may be set down softly, for as not to be mortally wounded by the Change, and a New Company being form'd on their Ashes, their Dead-Stock, i. e. their Forts and Castles may be taken into the New Company's Subscription at a due Valuation, by which, and saving their Effects abroad, they alledge they shall be enabled to pay their just Debts, which are above 300000*l.* and as for their Stock which owes them 814000*l.* more, they must sit down by the Loss, and are content.

I think this is an Impartial State of the Fact, and, I must own, I think it is a just Request they make.

But the Separate Traders, Alarm'd upon this Application of the Company, apply to the Parliament, and getting the Commissioners of Trade on their side, they fall upon the Company with a great deal of Clamour about Mismanagement, bring a great many of their own Servants to disclose their former Trust in the Company's Business—and the like; and the Sum of all, is, they desire to have the Trade laid open.—They alledge, First, The Forts and Castles were of no use, and so they had nothing to pay for them—But being driven from that by the Force of Demonstration, and the Testimony of their own Witnesses, they then

then fly to Undervalue them, lessening the Expence of Building, and the Expence of Maintaining — *And very much in the right of it they are, since they foresee, if they take them from the present Company, they must come to a Price for them.*

After this had been Debated three times at the Bar of the *House of Commons*, and the Separate Traders, having had their full Freedom of Speech, had used the Company *Courtsly*, to their Hearts Content, while Mr. Darnel, for but barely and modestly Defending the Company at the Bar of the *House of Commons*, was Insolently Challenged by some of the other Party to Fight him — In which, I think, with Submission, the House, not the Company was Insulted; and, no doubt, had they been moved in it, would have shewn their Resentment.

After all this, they carry their Point so far, as to obtain a Vote in the *House* for a Regulated Company — And a Bill is now depending in the *House* to bring it to pass.

What Hand the Separate Traders had in giving in the Scheme on which this Bill is Founded, *I have nothing to do with.* But setting aside all the Impracticables of the Project — The Weakness and Incapacity of such a Model to secure the Trade to the Nation, the many times, they have been called upon to say, What Security they can propose to the Nation, that the Trade shall be preserved, but to no purpose. It remains, to observe some Inconsistencies with it self, and some Inconsistencies with Common Justice, in this Demand of the Separate Traders.

First, They demand, that immediately upon the Passing this Bill, the Company shall be Transmigrated into a State of Entity, and Non-Entity together. They say, they shall be a Company indeed, and so they preserve the Name — But all their Trading Capacity is taken away, and struck with a Dead-palsy; by the Act, they have neither Tongue to speak, Hand to act, or Feet to walk, *They are now a Company Trading in their SOUL*, their Stock in Trade is their LIFE, their Power of Trade is their Locomotive Faculty to take away their Trade, and Power of Acting; and yet to call them a Company, is to Kill a Man, and then call him a Man? To say a Dead Man, is to speak Nonsense, it is a Corps; to say, a Dead Company, is in Trade meet Nonsense and Inconsistency; they are a Corps of a Company, but they are Shapeless, Lifeless, and Effeteless; they are a No-

thing, a meer Shadow and Lump of Inconsistency, without a Liberty to Trade.

But to come to the Justice of it, We talk loudly of PROPERTY in England, and when we are before the Parliament, we should more particularly talk of it — For 'tis the Language of the Place, 'tis the Darling of the House — Their Laws have been made to preserve it — Traitors have been Impeach'd for Invading it, Favourites have been Ruffled for Attempting it — And Kings for Neglect of it. — There never any Law pass'd to Injure it, nor ever was Man Protected for Assaulting it — And I firmly believe this is the first Offer, that at least in my time was ever presum'd to be made, to persuade the House to Weaken it.

'Tis the Glory of the *House of Commons*, that the meanest Subject's Property is safe from their Vigilance; and, I doubt not, when the House shall come to Examine how the Properties, not of a single Person, but of a large Number, a Community of People, is Shipwreck'd at once by this Attempt of the Separate Traders, they will, according to their ancient Usage, do Right, and Crush Wrong, whether Aged or Insinuated.

Upon the first Passing the Law these Gentlemen push'd at, the whole PROPERTY of the Company in Africa is destroy'd, and this I undertake to prove, thus — The Company from that Moment can Trade no more — They cannot supply their Servants, Factors and Agents, neither for Subsistence or Defence, much less for Trade; for they cannot send out a Ship, — The whole English Possession is given to the Separate Traders — And the Company is not so much as allowed a Moment to bring home their Effects; a thing never heard of before.

This discovers the Haste the Gentlemen were in — I wont say their Justice, for I can hardly think they could ask such a thing of the House in their Wits — But Flush'd with Success, they Devoured the Company at a Morsel, and never allowed themselves time to think of doing them the least Justice, no, not so much as fetching home their poor Banish'd Servants, who might Starve, or Sell themselves and their Masters, and run away with the Money; for this Act takes no Care of them.

Then for their Forts and Castles, they should be bound not to sell them; *sho' that is the Word*, but rather to deliver them to the Separate Traders — and that IMMEDIATELY — For they become the Separate

parate Traders that very Day the Act is pass'd, but for Payment they make no Provision, either for the Sum; how much, or the Day when they shall be paid——that is adjourn'd *sine Die*.

With what Face can Men of Sense and Honesty offer such a thing to a *House of Commons*, whose Foundation is PROPER-TY, and all its Superstructure Liberty; a *House* Famous for being the Sanctuary of the Oppressed, and the Terror of the Oppressor? How could they ask the *House* to grant the Surrender of Men's Properties without a Forfeiture, a Penalty without a Crime, an Exorbitant Fine without a Trial; a thing which destroys the Claim of Right, undermines *Magna Charta*, and which, whenever a Parliament grants, they divide against themselves, and act contrary to their Fundamental Principle?

To excuse this, they say it is refer'd to Commissioners, and if they cannot agree, it is left to the Crown; this is making it still worse; Did ever *House of Commons* put the Subjects Property in the Power of the Crown?——Whether would this lead us? And what made the late Revolution so necessary, but to take the Subject's Property out of the Power of the Crown?——

The Reference is still as bad, for it is likely they shall agree: Are you sure the Commissioners know the Value of what they are to Appraise?—Can Lawful Appraisals be nominated by them that do not see the Schedule of things— And understand them——Appraisers are to be indifferent between Parties, and to have no Interest in either; Appraisers are to be Sworn to do Justice between Buyer and Seller, and Appraisers are to have Judgment in the things they are to Appraise, and to View them.

Let us see how this can be here—— And when this is brought to an Upshot, *viz.* A Disagreement, the Queen shall appoint an Umpire.—— I doubt not, if Her Majesty were to Adjudge it Personally, the Company would be very Safe.—— But 'tis the Nature of the Thing is Debated:—— Did ever Parliament obliges the Subject to part with his Property without his Consent, and put the Valuation to the Crown; let them show us the Precedent? The Affair of the *India* Company was Refer'd to my Lord Treasurer, and the Justice of his Lordship in that Affair has a General Applause; but this was by Mutual Consent, of which here is not one word.

Well now, suppose this Arbitration or Appraisal ended, and the Value Determined, how shall they be paid?—— All the Proposal, is by a Tax to be laid upon the Export of the Trade, and yet not a Man is obliged to Export one Farthing— A blessed Security! no Export, no Tax; no Tax, no Payment; no Payment, no Bargain— And where's the Justice of this? For the Forts must be delivered, they took care to fix a Day for that (*viz.*) immediately—— And to be paid for immediately after latter Lamas.

Well, but say they, we shall certainly Trade; very well, Gentlemen, pray, for how much? I Challenge them all to give me an Answer to that short Question—— And if I were to Interrogate a Separate Trader at the Bar of the *House of Commons*, I would venture to be Exported Myself, if they could give any Answer, but what is here set down in the following short Dialogue.

Review. Pray, how many will take the Freedom of your Company?

Sep. Trader. I cannot tell.

Rev. Pray, how much will you raise by Fines upon Freedoms of your Company?

S. T. I cannot tell.

Rev. Sir, pray, by your Project, how much will you trade for to *Africa*?

S. T. I cannot tell.

Rev. Pray, how much will you be able to raise by a Tax on your Trade?

S. T. I cannot tell.

Rev. Pray, shall you raise enough to maintain your Forts and Castles?

S. T. I cannot tell.

Rev. Pray, when will you be able to pay the Company for them?

S. T. I cannot tell.

If this be a Foundation to take the Company's Property from them——If this be a Foundation to take their Trade from them; if this be a Foundation to secure the *African* Trade upon, which is already voted necessary to be preserv'd, then we have fought for and bought so dear our Liberty, to a less Purpose than ever I imagin'd.

Pray, what is Liberty——But a Freedom to possess Property, a Liberty to enjoy it, and a Right to defend it?——And this is so much the Privilege of an *English* Man, that no Human Power can, without a Crime to forfeit, or a Consent to yield it, divest him of it—— If it can, ye may wipe your Mouths with *Magna Charta*, Claim of Right, and all the Laws hitherto to defend them.